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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

It seems that I've become overly preoccupied with talking about the weather in most of my columns lately. And, I started to think about that for some reason. I've decided that it's okay some times. Why, you might ask? Well, the weather helps determine our moods as well as our daily activities, especially during the summer months. We make plans depending on what the weather is going to be like. Living in New England, it's the extremes in the weather patterns that drive me crazy! We all probably share similar views; I just may do it more often. Anyway, it's been another terrific week and the heat, and especially the humidity, has been at tolerable levels.

Over the past couple of years, we've been inundated with news pertaining to the growth and decline of what has been named the "dot-coms." Companies that started out as "a cool idea" have turned many people into millionaires. And after a short time - or as the "fad" wore off as I like to call it - the companies have started to wane and many fail. The stock market's history over the past few years bears this out.

Why do I call this phenomena a fad? Like anything, someone either comes up with a new idea or exploits an existing one. The internet is nothing new. However, the potential for it to make money was. People saw the "information superhighway" as a road to making millions. But most get rich quick schemes, legitimate or otherwise, are fads - something that is short-lived. While the internet is here to stay, in one form or another, making a fast buck with it has likely passed.

Many people bought dot-com stocks and many made money. Personally, playing the stock market is worse than gambling (and I like to gamble). If you can afford it, it's definitely a good think if you don't mind the risks. But not for me. Especially in the dot-com arena. I can play 5-card stud and bluff with a 10-high hand; you can't do that playing with stocks!

So where am I going with this? Well, when I see these upstart companies making millions of dollars and then spend it foolishly, I get ticked off. Have you ever been curious and checked out some of these failed dot-coms when they're forced to sell of their belongings? Surely, some of those items would include office furniture, PCs, and the like. But I look to see the "odd" stuff being sold off - like office jacuzzis, arcade machines - the "exotic" stuff. I have to laugh. These companies made tons of money

quickly and spent it just as fast.

So when I heard of some of these dot-coms paying huge money to sponsor college bowl games, I cringed. It's just not right to see company sponsorship included in games like the Rose Bowl and the rest of them. I'd say it was un-American, but surely capitalism is as American as apple pie! So when I see sports teams and their stadiums being sponsored or named after these dot-coms, I also see things going downhill. And dot-coms spending gazillions of dollars to a 15-second commercial during the Super Bowl?! Where are some of these companies now, and their names on sport franchises? Enron Field - gone. PSInet - gone. And the latest hit close to home, with last year's Super Bowl New England Patriots - CMGI Field is now Gillette Stadium. True, another big business name buys a great advertising gimmick, but Gillette is a tried and true business and it has been sponsoring sporting events for decades. I would agree that businesses like CMGI couldn't predict their business future and they probably thought buying naming rights to a football stadium was a good idea at the time. But these companies grew too quickly; they should have been more prudent. I don't have a lot of sympathy for the companies although I certainly have a lot for the employees who have now become the losers. Look where the fad got them. It makes you wonder.

Until next time...

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AUN Announcement

AtariForums.Com Ready For Action!

Atari Users Network reinforces its commitment the worldwide Atari community with the announcement of it's new Atari-dedicated website, Atari Talk Forums (http://www.atariforums.com).

ATF features CAB-friendly message bases on subjects ranging from classic gaming to 16/32 bit computing and beyond.

Now any Atari user with any computer with an internet connection and just about any browser (even Lynx!) can participate in a message base system without worrying about Java, Javascript or other schemes that, even if you can make use of them, serve mostly to slow your computer down.

It's informative, fun, and free so what are you waiting for? Access ATF right now at http://www.atariforums.com

CrippleMiNT

Little MiNT/-Net installer which fits on a disk for TOS file systems.
"Take as is"-Software

<A HREF="http://mico-mint.atari.org">http://mico-mint.atari.org</A>

Have fun!

Marc-Anton

.tSCc. Releases New Wolfenstein Preview for ST

A new preview of the Wolfenstein port to the ST has been released by Ray of .tSCc. There are no baddies or weapons yet, but it does feature higher resolution texture-mapped walls (compared to the previous version), doors that work, and the "traditional" Wolf3d control system. (Alt to strafe, shift to run etc)

What's more, it runs in full screen mode on any 1 meg ST at a playable frame rate! It should also run on clones, according to the author, who tests on a TT and an ST.

Hit the link to download the demo

<A HREF="http://files.dhs.nu/files_game/wolf_v02.zip">http://files.dhs.nu/files_game/wolf_v02.zip</A>

Atari Web-site FAQ!!!

Everyone,

A few days ago I asked you for some web-sites that you visit quite frequently that you would like to have added to a FAQ for our comp.sys.atari.st newsgroup. Here is a list of everything that I have and some of what people have given me in my e-mail. Thanks to all who have sent me there favorite web-sites!!! This is meant as a good resource for people to find a web-sites related to Atari computers. This list is by NO means complete and can always be added to or deleted from if found that a site is no longer operational. Please direct all comments to me at firest@williams-net.com. Please if you have any web-sites to add to this list by all means send them to me and I will add them in. If you find a web-site that NO longer works let me know and I will check it out. I will do my best to update this list at least once a month and post in this newsgroup. We as Atarians must band together to help to ensure the survival of our platform!!

Thanks,
Carey Christenson

Atari Vendors

Video 61 and Atari Sales (Sells Atari 8-bit and 16 bit hardware and software)
<A HREF="http://www.angelfire.com/mn/video61/">http://www.angelfire.com/mn/video61/</A>

Cortex Design (Seller of Eclipse Graphics Card)

<A HREF="http://www.cortex-design.co.uk/">http://www.cortex-design.co.uk/</A>

Woller Systems (Sells Atari Hardware and Software)
<A HREF="http://www.woller.com/">http://www.woller.com/</A>

Merlancia Industries (Was planning on making a PPC
Atari compatible
computer needed 2000 pre-orders though)
<A HREF="http://www.merlancia.com/">http://www.merlancia.com/</A>

Atari Downloads

University of Michigan Archives
<A HREF="http://www.umich.edu/~archive/atari/">http://www.umich.edu/~archive/ata
ri/</A>

Atari Hardware

Atari Eiffel Interface PS/2
<A HREF="http://perso.wanadoo.fr/laurent.favard/eiffel_e.html">http://perso.wana
doo.fr/laurent.favard/eiffel_e.html</A>

Atari-launchpad: Hardware projects and information
<A HREF="http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Bay/8745/pages/h">http://www.geo
cities.com/SiliconValley/Bay/8745/pages/h</A>
ardware.html

Eclipse User’s Support Page
<A HREF="http://www.vianet.ca/~joshua/">http://www.vianet.ca/~joshua/</A>

Czuba Tech (Designer of the upcoming CT60)
<A HREF="http://www.czuba-tech.com/accueil/english/welcome.htm">http://www.czuba
-tech.com/accueil/english/welcome.htm</A>

Ethernet Adapter Details (From Elmar Hilgart)
<A HREF="http://www.asamnet.de/~hilgarte/ether_e.htm">http://www.asamnet.de/~hil
garte/ether_e.htm</A>

Passage (Atari Info web-site)
<A HREF="http://hem.passagen.se/atari/">http://hem.passagen.se/atari/</A>

Mario Becroft’s Atari Hardware Page
<A HREF="http://gem.win.co.nz/mb/atarihw/">http://gem.win.co.nz/mb/atarihw/</A>

Atari Coldfire Project
<A HREF="http://acp.atari.org">http://acp.atari.org</A>

Frontier Systems (Hardware developer of the DEESSE card and XTOS Computer)
<A HREF="http://www.frontier-systems.de/indexen.htm">http://www.frontier-systems
.de/indexen.htm</A>

Atari Ethernet Adapter (Lyndon Amsdon adapter)
<A HREF="http://hardware.atari.org/">http://hardware.atari.org/</A>

Atari Sites

The Atari ST Quick FAQ (A very good resource for Atari
ST, Mega ST, Mega STe,Falcon 030 and TT030
<A HREF="http://www.megacom.net/~q-funk/ST/">http://www.megacom.net/~q-funk/ST/<
/A>

Another Atari FAQ devoted for the TT030
<A HREF="http://members.tripod.com/~TT030/">http://members.tripod.com/~TT030/</A
>

Anthill industries
<A HREF="http://www.netset.com/~baldrick">http://www.netset.com/~baldrick</A>

A-One Magazine
<A HREF="http://www.atarinews.org/">http://www.atarinews.org/</A>

The Definitive Atari Resource ATARI.ORG
<A HREF="http://www.atari.org">http://www.atari.org</A>

Magic Online
<A HREF="http://www.magical-sides.de/">http://www.magical-sides.de/</A>

The Milan Computer Company
<A HREF="http://www.milan-computer.de/">http://www.milan-computer.de/</A>

My Atari - The monthly on-line magazine devoted to Atari
<A HREF="http://www.myatari.net/">http://www.myatari.net/</A>

Atari-Home site
<A HREF="http://www.atari-home.de/">http://www.atari-home.de/</A>

Site of the Future XTOS computer!!!
<A HREF="http://www.xtos.de/">http://www.xtos.de/</A>

Atari Software

Anodyne Software Home Page
<A HREF="http://www.anodynesoftware.com/">http://www.anodynesoftware.com/</A>

Aniplayer Support (There are 2 web-sites for this piece of software)
<A HREF="http://jf.omnis.ch/aniplayer.shtml">http://jf.omnis.ch/aniplayer.shtml<
/A>
or
<A HREF="http://aniplayer.atari.org">http://aniplayer.atari.org</A>

Dursoft Development
<A HREF="http://home.sunrise.ch/dursoft/progs_e.html">http://home.sunrise.ch/dur
soft/progs_e.html</A>

Escape
<A HREF="http://www.inf.tu-dresden.de/~nf2/">http://www.inf.tu-dresden.de/~nf2/<
/A>

Falcamp Homepage
<A HREF="http://deunstg.free.fr/sct1/falcamp/">http://deunstg.free.fr/sct1/falca
mp/</A>

Five to Five
<A HREF="http://www.optik.uni-">http://www.optik.uni-</A>
erlangen.de/osmin/haeusler/people/hs/525e.html

FVDI (For use with Eclipse Graphics Card)
<A HREF="http://rand.thn.htu.se/~johan/fvdi.html">http://rand.thn.htu.se/~johan/fvdi.html</A>

GokMasE's Atari Page - Atari ICQ
<A HREF="http://aicq/atari-users.net/">http://aicq/atari-users.net/</A>

Heinisoft Homepage
<A HREF="http://heinisoft.atari-users.net/">http://heinisoft.atari-users.net/</A>

Highwire Development Project (New Browser for the Atari)
<A HREF="http://highwire.atari-users.net/">http://highwire.atari-users.net/</A>

PlaymyCD
<A HREF="http://www.chez.com/lrd/">http://www.chez.com/lrd/</A>

Invers Software (I believe this is the Calamus web-site)
<A HREF="http://www.calamus.net/us/index.html">http://www.calamus.net/us/index.html</A>

Patricks Homepage
<A HREF="http://members.tripod.de/funmedia/">http://members.tripod.de/funmedia/</A>

Pixart's Homepage
<A HREF="http://www.pixart.de/">http://www.pixart.de/</A>

Quincy shareware
<A HREF="http://gbarges.free.fr/quincy_e.html">http://gbarges.free.fr/quincy_e.html</A>

Sector One Homepage - What's New!!!
<A HREF="http://deunstg.free.fr/sct1/index.html">http://deunstg.free.fr/sct1/index.html</A>

ST-CAD's Homepage
<A HREF="http://home.t-online.de/home/MKrutz/">http://home.t-online.de/home/MKrutz/</A>

Atari IRC Homepage
<A HREF="http://q1.net/~atari/">http://q1.net/~atari/</A>

Tim's Atari Midi World
<A HREF="http://tamw.atari-users.net/timidi.htm">http://tamw.atari-users.net/timidi.htm</A>

Vassilis Hompage (Developer of STing)
<A HREF="http://users.otenet.gr/~papval/">http://users.otenet.gr/~papval/</A>

VISION's Homepage
<A HREF="http://www.multimania.com/jlusetti/visione.htm">http://www.multimania.com/jlusetti/visione.htm</A>

Wildfire
<A HREF="http://wildfire.atari.org">http://wildfire.atari.org</A>

Thanks,
Carey Christenson

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. It seems that Mother Nature is cutting me some slack this week. It's been much less humid and cooler this week than it was last week, and it's a much appreciated change from the past month or so.

I've been reading a lot of interesting stuff lately about global warming. I haven't been seeking it out, the articles just kind of found their way into my reading material. Some of the stuff is pretty interesting. Like the fact that for the three days after September 11th when there was no air traffic in the United States, satellites detected a change in temperatures due to the lack of jet contrails (the wispy white lines you often see behind a jet).

What interests me is not so much that there could be a difference because of what seems like a miniscule amount of moisture, but that we've never thought to look into it before. Once jets started criss-crossing the continent, it would have been kind of hard to stop them for an esoteric test.

That was just the most interesting article, but there were a bunch of others. I don't pretend to know what is 'real' and what isn't when it comes to global warming. For every opinion with evidence to back it up, there is opposite opinion with just as much evidence behind it. But it DOES make sense to me that we should try to prevent the worst-case scenario.

The painful truth is that, no matter what we do to our planet, it will remain intact and pretty much as it has been for uncounted eons. It is US that will pay the price. And, when the time is right, the planet will settle into its own rhythm again as if nothing untoward had ever taken place. How's THAT for a humbling thought?

I know that none of this has anything to do with Atari computers, but I thought that one or two of you out there might share the same ideas.

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==========

James Alexander asks about BBS software:

"I've got a Mega 4 ST setup (with hard disk & cd-rom) that I've been

wanting to setup a bbs on. I've been trying a number of shareware and pd bbs programs and found them all to be unsatisfactory (either don't run properly or impossible to setup, literally). I've been through stadel, citadel, fnordadel, nitelite, I even have a few commercial bbs programs I've bought used (bbs express, QMI bb/st, GIME) and so far haven't found one that worked properly. Gime actually came close but it kept screwing up dates every few seconds.

Does anyone have a bbs program that actually works properly?"

Dennis Bishop tells James:

"I used to run BBS Express ST on my TT/030 for many years without software troubles."

James tells Dennis:

"I tried it a number of years ago. While its not impossible to set up its far from flawless. It wouldn't answer the modem reliably (I tried several modems & ST's). It also had the aggravating problem of clearing the screen at random times rendering it absolutely useless. I took another look at it earlier this year and it *still* has the same problems."

Grzegorz Pawlik asks about using a VGA monitor on his ST:

"Can I connect a VGA monitor (Atari PTC1426, the one from TT) to 1040ST? I need ST-High resolution only. I heard it is possible with SVGA monitors, but what about this old VGA one?"

Edward Baiz tells Grzegorz:

"I have heard there was a special cable for this, but I did it by using an old piece of ST hardware called a Video Key and a video converter. The Video Key has a cable that inserts in the ST's regular monitor connection. On the other end it has RCA outs that go into the Video converter. It looks fine to me. Others were impressed when they saw it."

Peter West adds:

"Certainly on a Falcon an old IBM PS/2 VGA monitor works fine up to 640*480, including ST-High's 600*400. It will also do the lower ST resolutions - in my case in greyscale, as it's a mono monitor. I see no reason why it shouldn't do the same on an ST, providing you get or make the required adaptor.

This is assuming that the PTC1426 uses a 'normal' RGB or composite monitor input. I know that the 19" large-screen monitor for the TT did *not* - that had TTL inputs which only worked with the TT's second monitor socket."

Glenn Bruner asks about one of my favorites... ICD's Tape Backup:

"I have a ICD FA-ST tape unit that I'm trying to figure out how to use.

Have some backup’s on tape that I’m trying to get the contents of to CD. What ICD software is used to operate the FA-ST tape unit?
I noticed the DMA connections and the SCSI connection on the back of the unit.

Is this an either or type of connection? Meaning I could use the DMA or the SCSI? I’m going to run this on a TT030."

Edward Baiz tells Glenn:

"If you have a SCSI Tape Driver, I would get Diamond Back III. It works great with SCSI tape drives. It worked like a charm for me until the tape driver went bye-bye. Now I just back things up to CD’s."

Glenn replies:

"Thanks for the advice. I’ll give it a try.

I hope the ICD tapes I have are not written in some proprietary format. That’s the big drawback of most tape backup systems."

Edward tells Glenn:

"I do not think that will be a problem. Just tell DB III to erase what is already on the tape and go from there."

Daniele Donati asks about using a PC mouse:

"I’ve read it is possible to connect a PC mouse to an Atari through a 9-25 pins adaptor.

Well, I’ve the PC mouse and the adaptor, but I don’t know where to find/download the driver needed for this to work."

Grzegorz Pawlik tells Daniele:

"If you’re using TOS, you need GENMOUSE. It can be found on all Atari ftp servers, including the "classic" umich.edu/~archive/atari one ;-)
Or you may download it directly from here:

http://gregory.atari.pl/pliki/mysz-pc.zip

First you have to start GENMOUSE.APP and enter the correct parameters (the port you have your mouse connected to, on plain ST it is "Modem 1", on Falcon - "Modem 2", on TT it might be any of the four available...)
Click on "Speichern" to save the actual driver. Put it in your AUTO folder.

Experiment with various parameters of GENMOUSE (options "Beschleunigung", "Dynamik", "Glatten" to get the smooth movement of the mouse cursor.

If you’re using MagiC (and if you’re not, why not? ;-)) you should get MWheel. It supports PC serial *wheel* mouse, so not only you may use the PC mouse, but also you may scroll the window contents with

the wheel. This one works only with MagiC, though (at least on my TT it does *not* work with TOS 3.06, and with MiNT/XaAES it works partially, the wheel scrolling does not work). MWheel is to be found at ftp://chapelie.rma.ac.be/atari/utilities/mwheel.zip "

Mark Duckworth adds:

"http://pikachu.atari-source.com/~storage/mirrors/atari/chapelie.rma.ac.be/atari/utilities/genmouse.lzh

This is a serial mouse driver. Will work fine as long as the pc mouse is ms protocol or logitech (probably is)."

Todd Gill asks about the disks that should have come with his Falcon:

"I picked up a second hand Falcon about a week ago and the owner provided no disks with it. It is pretty much a bog standard Falcon except it has a 200 meg Seagate hard disk.

It is loaded with some misc. software (i.e garbage i have no interest in) and I would like to blank the hard disk and start over fresh. I understand that the OS is in roms (mine has 4.04 i believe), but I have no idea where to start.

Where can I obtain the disks that originally came with the Falcon? I am sure it must have came with some type of utilities or hard disk install disks.

Basically I want to start over fresh to learn the machine and no screw myself after formatting the hard disk."

Tim Conrardy asks Todd:

"What kind of software are you looking for? MIDI software? Graphic Tools?

As far as starting fresh, all you need do is delete what is there, but be careful. You don’t want to delete the booting programs.!! basically everything in the Auto-folder you might want to keep.

For FAQ’s on Atari stuff, feel free to visit my faq page:

http://tamw.atari-users.net/download.htm

The Atari Quick Faq is a good one. Hallvard’s pages are good too.

For some of the best MIDI software, most of which works on a Falcon, visit my main site:

http://tamw.atari-users.net "

Barrie at KeyExchange adds:

"Oops on that one Tim.

You should look for and KEEP a file ending in .SYS, e.g. HDDRIVER.SYS or

AHDI.SYS or ICDBOOT.SYS, which should be in the ROOT of drive C, not the AUTO folder.

The DESKTOP.INF or NEWDESK.INF should be kept until you know how to install devices, too."

Tony Rudzki asks about emulating a Mac on his Falcon:

"Does the Spectre GCR work on a Falcon? With a VGA monitor preferably...."

Mike Freeman tells Tony:

"Someone correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe the answer is no. The ROM/Cartridge port that Spectre GCR plugs into is different on the Falcon than it is on the ST(e) and TT, I think I read somewhere. It'd be cool if it did work, though. Anyone know if there's a way to adapt the Falcon's ROM port to accommodate the Spectre GCR?"

Don Wolfe asks about MagiC and GEMulator:

"I installed Gemulator 2000 on my new Laptop and transferred some programs from my TT30 to the PC and all works well. The Doc's that come with Gemulator 2000 tell how to install MagiC to work with Gemulator, I tried installing MagiC (as per directions) but something is wrong and Gemulator Locks-up ??

Anybody out there knows how to get this setup working right?"

Dan (aka Baldrick) tells Don:

"Unless you have some old game or something that you want to play, I would recommend you dump Gemulator and go with one of the other setups.

MagicPC if you want commercial and stable

Aranym if you want free and the prospect to turn that laptop into a dedicated Atari at a later point.

STeem if you just want to play some old games or applications that run in one of the standard atari screen resolutions.

Any of these is almost 100% guaranteed to be a stabler product and provide you with more atari satisfaction."

Well folks, that's it for this week. I know it's short, but it's getting late and I really need to get some good old-fashioned shut-eye. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - More Games, Smaller Packages!
Games Hot As Summer!
Sega Looks to Buy Game Publishers!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Game Consoles Hot As Summer

The $100 May price drops on video game hardware from Microsoft and Sony, along with a $50 slash from Nintendo, have successfully spurred sales during the normally slow summer months.

In May and June, Sony remained the console leader with its PlayStation 2, while Microsoft's Xbox sales have nearly doubled, outselling Nintendo's GameCube every month this year except April, according to NPD Group.

After the price drop, Microsoft's May hardware sales of 230,000 units were nearly triple the horrendous tally of April. Sony sold 520,000 units in May -- 2 1/2 times more than the month earlier -- and Nintendo increased its GameCube sales by 37% to 112,300. In June, Sony sold 693,000 PS2s, Microsoft sold 265,000 Xboxes, and Nintendo sold 213,000 GameCubes. Microsoft and Sony sell their consoles for $199 and Nintendo for $149.

"Xbox is doing extremely well right now in the United States, which suggests that consumers don't mind spending the extra $50," said Simon Price, an analyst at International Development Group. "Nintendo has a killer lineup of games shipping, so I expect GameCube sales to pick up by late summer. Sony operates alone, selling huge numbers of hardware, especially since the price drop."

At the end of its fiscal year, June 30, Microsoft had sold 3.9 million units worldwide, compared with its forecast of 5.4 million-6 million units. In the United States, Microsoft sold 1.4 million units since the product launched in November and is on course to sell an additional 4.5 million units by year's end, according to International Development Group.

Sony, which sold 7.3 million PS2s last year in the United States, is on track to reach an installed base of 15.3 million U.S. units this year. Nintendo is expected to come in third in this year's race with 4.3 million GameCubes sold by year's end, bringing its tally to 5.5 million in the United States.

By June 30 of next year, Microsoft expects to have sold 9 million-11

million Xboxes worldwide. Sony, which already has sold 30 million PS2s worldwide, expects to sell an additional 20 million units by March 31.

Three of Microsoft's games have sold more than 1 million units: the first-person shooter "Halo," which just surpassed 2 million in sales; the street racer "Project Gotham Racing"; and Tecmo's "Dead or Alive 3." That's a record for a new console system, according to International Development Group. As of June 30, Microsoft had sold about 20 million software units worldwide, half of which were sold in the United States. "Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind," the recently released role-playing game from Bethesda Softworks, is selling briskly.

The three hardware giants are expected to ride the wave of low-priced consoles into the fall as November and December typically account for nearly 60% of hardware and software sales in a year.

With the price drops set, it's now up to exclusive software to entice consumers to purchase one or more of these next-generation systems. Sony and Nintendo have the edge on Microsoft in this department.

Sony has the cinematic epic "The Getaway" and the 3-D platform games "Sly Cooper" and "Ratchet & Clank." The company also has such key third-party games as Capcom's horror action-adventure "Devil May Cry 2" and feudal Japanese adventure "Onimusha 2" along with RockStar's "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City." Nintendo has "Mario Sunshine," "Star Fox Adventures," "Metroid Prime" and Capcom's "Resident Evil 0" to lure gamers to its lowest-price console. Microsoft, which recently delayed three titles until next year, has the 3-D platform game "Blinx: The Time Sweeper," Ubi Soft's "Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell" and LucasArts' "Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic."

Sega Says Pursuing Game Publisher Deals

Japanese video game publisher Sega Corp. is looking to acquire other publishers in the United States and Europe as part of its bid to become the largest player in the booming field, a senior company executive said on Tuesday.

Sega, which abandoned the hardware market 18 months ago to focus exclusively on game software, is looking at a wide range of possible business combinations, Charles Bellfield, a Sega vice president told Reuters.

Sega has set a goal of becoming the No. 2 game publisher in the United States this year and vying for the No. 1 spot globally through fiscal 2004.

Sega may have kicked off the round of consolidation industry watchers have long expected by declaring an ambition to pursue other publishers much like its best-known character, Sonic the Hedgehog, pursues gold rings.

Bigger video game companies, flush with cash from recent record-level sales, have been widely expected to gobble up smaller publishers, taking advantage of their competitive difficulties such as the lack of economies of scale.

Bellfield said the only independent game publisher that Sega could rule

out at the moment as an acquisition target was No. 1 publisher Electronic Arts Inc., with a market capitalization of more than $8 billion and annual revenue of more than $1.7 billion.

Sega, which once made game system hardware to challenge industry leaders Nintendo and Sony, has benefited from its January, 2001 move to focus exclusively on software. The company returned to profitability on an operating basis in fiscal 2002 after two years of heavy losses.

While it is unclear how Sega would finance a potential deal, the company's cash hoard is almost twice as large as the market capitalization of Acclaim Entertainment Inc., the largest U.S. publisher trading at less than $5 per share.

Sega had 59.91 billion yen ($508 million) in long-term convertible debt as of the end of March, but it also had 62.76 billion yen ($532.2 million) in cash.

Bellfield said Sega had been set to announce a deal with a game publisher at the industry's Electronic Entertainment Expo in May, but the agreement fell through. He declined to name the company.

The most "interesting opportunities" for potential acquisitions were among the smaller, listed publishers that might provide development teams and intellectual property, such as rights to game franchises, Bellfield said.

But, he added, "(I) can't confirm or deny any particular talks with any particular company at this point."

The smaller U.S. listed game publishers, include notable names like Acclaim Entertainment Inc., Midway Games Inc., Interplay Entertainment Corp. and 3DO Co.

Jeetil Patel, an analyst at Deutsche Bank Securities, said almost any company apart from EA was a possible acquisition target, including THQ Inc., which publishes Sega games for Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s Game Boy Advance handheld console.

Bellfield also said Sega plans to be more directly involved in the European market in 2003.

He said there were no announcements at this point about the company's relationship with Infogrames Entertainment , Europe's largest games publisher and distributor of Sega games in Europe. That distribution contract expires March 31, 2003.

After a report in the Wall Street Journal Europe on Tuesday about Sega's plans, shares in Infogrames Entertainment rocketed 23 percent on speculation the company could be a take-over target.

An Infogrames spokeswoman declined to comment, citing company policy on market rumors.

More Games Come in Smaller Packages

Size does matter, when the subject is software packaging. For years, purchasers of computer software have taken home Wheaties-sized boxes,

pulled off the shrink wrap and torn through yards of cardboard -- folded stiffly to give the external sensation of fullness -- to get eventually to one lonely disc in a CD jewel case and a few small leaflets.

And retailers such as Wal-Mart found themselves swamped under a wave of other products in growing categories, such as video games and DVD movies, all jostling for shelf space.

So earlier this year, the PC game industry finally took the hint: It slimmed down the bloated packaging to about the height and width of those items.

Many recent games, including Grand Theft Auto III (Take 2), Lilo & Stitch (Disney) and Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002 (EA Sports) have hit stores in boxes not much bigger than a paperback. The new measurements -- 7 1/2 by 5 1/4 inches -- match the width and height of DVD packaging, and they're slightly thicker at an inch deep. They're one-fourth the volume of traditional software boxes.

Widespread adoption could save publishers -- which collectively released 1,500 games and educational programs last year, says NPDTechworld -- tens of thousands on packaging costs, freight and storage. "It seems more environmentally friendly, too," says Trudy Muller of Electronic Arts.

In the '80s, environmental groups assailed the music industry over the original cardboard "longboxes" for CDs. But, to the surprise of many in the PC industry, there never was a similar clamor about the oversized PC boxes. "It always struck me that was at least one bullet we seemed to dodge," says Doug Lowenstein, president of the Interactive Digital Software Association, a trade group.

Instead, retailers' concerns about shrinking shelf space ultimately made packaging an issue. "We wanted to preserve a box size that still allowed companies to communicate important marketing messages," he says, while responding to the "clear sense that if (retailers) were going to continue to be able to stock as many of these games at retail, you had to reduce the box size. Frankly, a lot of retailers were shrinking the amount of space they were devoting to PC games because console games are so hot."

About $1.9 billion worth of PC games will be sold this year, according to DFC Intelligence, a San Diego-based market research and consulting firm. But video-game system software will far surpass that at $3.7 billion. And all games for Sony's PlayStation 2, Nintendo's GameCube and Microsoft's Xbox come in packages the size of DVD boxes.

In comparison, computer software came in all shapes and sizes. Tomb Raider games from Eidos came in boxes shaped like pyramids. Links Championship 2002 and Age of Empires II: The Conquerers, both from Microsoft, were different heights and widths.

Many retailers support the new standard. "It provides a variety of benefits including the ability to expand our assortment," says Wal-Mart spokewoman Karen Burk.

Game publishers had been wary of changing sizes unless all of them agreed. The belief was that bigger boxes "showed you were getting a lot for your money," says Jerry Madaio of Electronics Boutique. But consumers have warmed to the change, he says: "Most think (the boxes) didn't need to be that big. Some are even saying now they may keep the box."

Not all companies have adopted the new size, but Lowenstein believes most will.

With games such as Tomb Raider and Thief, Eidos used different-shaped boxes to make their games stand out, but the game maker has reluctantly converted, says Eidos' Paul Baldwin. With larger boxes, he says, "you could actually market a product differently."

Microsoft would like to see boxes shrink even further, to the exact size of DVD and Xbox game packages, an experiment it tried with Clan Mech Pak, a $12.99 add-on to the popular MechWarrior 4 game.

"It's very expensive to make good games," says Beth Featherstone, head of marketing for Microsoft's PC group. "The cheaper and more automated the packaging, the more dollars you can put into making games better."

Since his group has been asking PC makers to help with more environmentally friendly disposal of PCs, Ted Smith, executive director of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition in San Jose, Calif., hopes that the move is a sign of things to come. "If this kind of agreement works and they don't lose money, maybe they can think about incorporating recycled content into the packaging and the game (CDs) themselves," he says. "That's really the next step."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft to Reveal More Windows Code

Microsoft Corp. will reveal hundreds of pieces of proprietary computer code from its monopoly Windows operating system in the next several weeks to comply with an antitrust settlement it signed with the U.S. Justice Department last year, the company said on Monday.

The software giant said the disclosures are part of its first steps to comply with the settlement that must still be approved by a federal judge and is still opposed by nine state attorneys general seeking stiffer sanctions.

Microsoft plans to disclose 385 pieces of computer code and internal operating rules, previously kept secret, that outside developers can use to write programs to run on Windows.

But Brad Smith, a Microsoft senior vice president, told reporters during a conference call that, "It is probably too early to really determine how this will affect us and how it will affect our competitors."

A spokeswoman for California Attorney General Bill Lockyer said officials were awaiting industry comment to gauge the effect of the disclosures. "We obviously believe there needs to be tougher remedies," said Sandy

Michioku.

In its original case against Microsoft, the Justice Department and 18 states had accused the company of deliberately withholding computer code in Windows to hamper competitors.

Microsoft reached a deal with the Justice Department in November. Nine of the 18 states in the lawsuit agreed to sign on to the deal, but nine others are asking U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly for tougher restrictions.

Microsoft said that, in addition to 272 pieces of code, it also would reveal 113 proprietary software "protocols" that computer server makers can license to make their machines work better with Windows desktops.

The company said new, uniform terms for the licensing of Windows went into effect Aug 1. The terms would apply to the top 20 computer makers and be offered to other manufacturers.

Microsoft also said upcoming updates of the new Windows XP operating system will allow computer makers and consumers to add and remove access to some Windows features such as Microsoft’s Internet Explorer, Windows media player, and Outlook Express.

The provisions were central to Microsoft’s settlement with the Justice Department, which the department says is designed to let computer makers customize the machines they sell with more non-Microsoft software.

The Justice Department said it was reviewing the licensing terms for revealing the protocols "to determine whether they are compliant with the terms of the proposed consent decree."

The dissenting states say their remedies would close loopholes in the Justice Department settlement and force Microsoft to sell a cheaper, stripped-down version of Windows, which could be customized by rival software makers.

In their final arguments before Kollar-Kotelly, the states said their most important demand was for Microsoft to disclose far more about the inner workings of Windows.

The nine states still pursuing the case are California, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Utah, West Virginia, plus the District of Columbia.

Microsoft’s critics in the computer industry were unmoved.

"They’re still retaining for themselves complete control over what they release, when they release it and what is suitable subject matter for release," Ken Wasch, head of the Software & Information Industry Association said in a telephone interview with Reuters.

Wasch said that during the trial Microsoft took the position it was already disclosing enough technical information to software developers. "Were they lying to us then, or are they lying to us now?" Wasch said.

Microsoft spokesman Jim Desler said the company has always provided enough technical disclosure to software developers. "These are just additional disclosures, obviously required by the consent decree," Desler said.

Microsoft has criticized the non-settling states' proposal as radical and harmful to consumers.

Microsoft said on Monday there was one Windows "programming interface" and one server protocol it would still keep secret for security reasons.

In a landmark ruling on the case in June 2001, a federal appeals court dismissed parts of the government's case, but upheld a lower court's conclusion that Microsoft had used illegal tactics to maintain its Windows monopoly.

Microsoft has told the judge it would be catastrophic if other companies got too much access to the inner workings of the operating system.

It said that would allow them to "clone" Windows, prompting Microsoft to stop investing in research and development on the operating system.

U.S. Monitoring Internet Attacks

This Internet attack apparently fizzled.

The federal government said that early Tuesday it detected a series of electronic attacks against U.S. Internet providers, launched hours after the FBI alerted technology companies and others of potential trouble.

The alert, sent out Monday evening and based on information from Italian authorities, cited "credible but nonspecific information that wide-scale hacker attacks" were planned against U.S. Web sites and Internet providers, "possibly emanating from Western Europe," a U.S. official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"There was a real spike in Internet traffic at odd hours," confirmed Richard Clarke, the Bush administration's top official for cyber-security. "It was clearly unusual because it was five times and seven times normal, but it didn't take anything down."

One firm that monitors the health of the Internet, Matrix NetSystems Inc., said it detected a 1 percent decrease in Internet accessibility within hours of the attacks, and a small number of the 3,000 Internet devices it monitors were completely overwhelmed within the United States. Analyst Abelardo Gonzalez said a 1 percent drop was a rare enough event that it probably reflected an impact from the attacks.

But most such organizations and companies said they barely detected a hiccup of unusual activity, with few reports of odd outages or even widespread e-mail delays.

"We're not seeing anything out of the ordinary," said Marty Lindner of the CERT Coordination Center, a federally funded research lab focused on computer security, formerly known as the Computer Emergency Response Team.

Another sensor network that monitors worldwide Internet traffic using thousands of computers "didn't receive any unusual reports," said Johannes Ullrich, who manages the network, called the Distributed Intrusion Detection System, or Dshield.

Officials said Tuesday that a flood of data spiking nearly 700 percent

more than usual was aimed at Internet providers and Web sites on the East coast starting about 2 a.m. EDT, then shifted toward providers and sites on the West coast.

But unlike some recent so-called "denial of service" attacks, which employed hundreds or thousands of computers to overwhelm Web sites, this latest attack appeared to come from a relatively small number of machines, the official said. That allowed Internet providers to protect their networks more easily by filtering data from the attacking computers.

Keynote Systems Inc., which measures the reliability and speed of Web sites and the Internet as a whole, saw no significant degradation during the day. The company checked major Internet highways as well as the performance of individual sites belonging to news organizations, search engines, and companies like Amazon and Microsoft.

"Availability has stayed pretty consistent," said Roopak Patel of Keynote.

Major Internet service providers like Verizon and Qwest also reported no problems.

U.S., Microsoft Settle Privacy Charges

Microsoft Corp. agreed on Thursday to submit to 20 years of U.S. government oversight of its online identity service in order to settle charges that it misled consumers about security and privacy standards.

Microsoft’s Passport service, which aims to make online shopping easier by storing passwords and credit-card numbers, came under scrutiny by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission last year after privacy groups said it would give the software giant unprecedented control over users’ personal information.

FTC officials said they found that Microsoft did not adequately protect users’ personal information, and that the service tracked users’ Web-browsing habits without their knowledge.

The company also falsely claimed that it would enhance the security of Internet transactions, the FTC said.

"They were saying that they had reasonable and appropriate security procedures. We thought those promises were deceptive," FTC Chairman Timothy Muris told reporters, adding that he was unaware of any breaches to the system.

Microsoft agreed to stop making false claims about Passport’s data-collection practices and security protections, and agreed to set up an enhanced computer-security system that must pass independent review every two years, for a period of 20 years.

Microsoft paid no fines, but would face fines of $11,000 per count if it does not maintain the security program, an amount that could add up quickly given the service’s 200-plus million users.

A Microsoft official said there were "lessons that can be learned" from the FTC action and that the company would improve its description and disclosure of Passport’s features.

"We've learned from the dialogue with the FTC and we will work to meet the high bar they are setting," said Microsoft General Counsel Brad Smith.

Tracking information collected by Passport would only be used for customer service needs and would be purged after 10 days in most cases, he said.

Activists who asked the FTC last summer to examine Passport said the settlement was the most significant victory for online privacy to date.

"Frankly, we're pleased," said Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, which led the consumer coalition. "In some areas the FTC went further than we anticipated."

Jason Catlett, president of privacy consulting firm Junkbusters Corp., said the most significant aspect was that the FTC decided to investigate in the first place.

"Finding that Microsoft has bad security is like shooting at a sitting duck," Catlett said. "What is significant is not that they hit the duck, but that they took the shot."

Microsoft, hit by break-ins to its network and criticism over its security, made "trustworthy computing" its top priority earlier this year after chairman Bill Gates called for more emphasis on security.

Smith said the company built Passport on what it thought was the most secure technology available at the time.

The Association for Competitive Technology, a technology group that has supported Microsoft in the past, said the agreement seemed excessive but would set new standards for the entire industry.

Passport faces pressure on other fronts. European Union authorities have taken at a hard look at the service, concerned that it does not comply with privacy laws and tell users how their personal information is used.

A group of high-tech firms calling itself the Liberty Alliance, led by Sun Microsystems Inc is planning a similar identity service.

Most Passport users signed up involuntarily when they set up a free Hotmail account, or bought the new Windows XP operating system, and few are active users, said Gartner analyst Avivah Litan. The settlement could help Microsoft by building trust in the system, she said.

"Consumers use Passport right now because they have to," Litan said.

One FTC source said Microsoft was eager to settle the case because it did not want further problems with Passport, which is at the core of the company's .NET initiate to move to Internet-based services.

"They caved," the source said.

Ashcroft Asked to Target Online Song Swappers

U.S. lawmakers have asked Attorney General John Ashcroft to go after Internet users who download unauthorized songs and other copyrighted material, raising the possibility of jail time for digital-music fans.

In a July 25 letter released late Thursday, some 19 lawmakers from both sides of the aisle asked Ashcroft to prosecute "peer-to-peer" networks like Kazaa and Morpheus and the users who swap digital songs, video clips and other files without permission from artists or their record labels.

The Justice Department should also devote more resources to policing online copyrights, the lawmakers said in their letter.

"Such an effort is increasingly important as online theft of our nation’s creative works is a growing threat to our culture and economy," the letter said.

A Justice Department spokesman declined to comment.

The recording industry says peer-to-peer services cut into CD sales, and has been battling them in court since 1999, when the five major labels sued pioneer service Napster Inc.

A U.S. federal judge ordered Napster to shut down its service in July 2001, but upstarts like Kazaa and Morpheus soon took its place. Kazaa, which in addition to music allows users to swap movies and other media files, said this week that its free software had been downloaded 100 million times.

Music labels have not ruled out suing individual users, and have pushed for the right to flood peer-to-peer networks with bogus files, or disrupt them by other means.

While a debate has raged on Capitol Hill over the proper balance between copyright and technological innovation, U.S. law-enforcement authorities have taken a minimal role.

The Justice Department filed a supporting motion siding with the record labels in the Napster case, but has brought no cases of its own.

The move was welcomed by the Recording Industry Association of America, which represents the five major labels --Bertelsmann AG, Vivendi Universal, Sony Corp., AOL Time Warner Inc . and EMI Group Plc.

"There is no doubt, mass copying off the Internet is illegal and deserves to be a high priority for the Department of Justice (news - web sites)," said RIAA Chairman Hilary Rosen in a statement.

An analyst for a digital civil-liberties group said the Justice Department probably had better things to do with its time.

The letter "implies that Justice should be going after relatively innocent behaviors that I suspect most Americans don’t think warrant the time," said Alan Davidson, an associate director at the Center for Democracy and Technology.

On the other hand, "we would much rather see current authorities be used before Congress goes and creates brand new laws," Davidson said.

A staffer for Texas Republican Rep. Lamar Smith, who signed the letter, said that lawmakers did not want FBI agents to arrest casual users but instead go after operators of network "nodes" that handle much of the traffic.

Among those signing the letter were: Delaware Democratic Sen. Joseph Biden; Wisconsin Republican Rep. James Sensenbrenner; Virginia Democratic Rep. Bobby Scott; Michigan Democratic Rep. John Conyers; North Carolina Republican Rep. Howard Coble; and California Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

Computers Under Attack Can Hack Back, Expert Says

Can vigilantism save computers from the next big virus threat?

Striking back against a computer that is attacking you may be illegal under U.S. law, but a security researcher says people should be allowed to neutralize one that is unwittingly spreading destructive Internet worms like Nimda.

"Arguably the biggest threat the Internet faces today is the propagation of a big worm," Timothy Mullen, chief information officer of AnchorIS Inc., based in Charleston, South Carolina.

Worms are a form of self-propagating virus that once set in motion can wreak havoc by taking control of other machines and then use these to launch attacks on the wider Internet.

"The next worm is going to happen, and it’s going to be worse," Mullen said at the annual DefCon hacker conference, which started on Friday.

The defensive strategy of "strike back" is gaining some support among members of the U.S. Congress. They will be voting on a bill backed by movie and music studios that would allow retaliation to help thwart Internet piracy.

The bill, proposed by Democratic Congressman Howard Berman of California, would protect copyright holders from liability if they infuse destructive decoy digital files into peer-to-peer networks to penalize users.

Mullen said his hack back idea is different because it is designed to improve the security of cyberspace and would not harm any computer systems.

The Code Red and Nimda worms that hit last year shut down corporate computer systems and gobbled up bandwidth, with Nimda becoming the most widespread and one of the most destructive worms of 2001.

To counter this, Mullen has come up with a way for machines that have been attacked but not infected to trace the worm back to the attacking machine and prevent it from spreading the worm to other computers.

Using his technique, the computer that launches an attack is paralyzed and requires an administrator to restart it, but it stays online and is not otherwise harmed, said Mullen, who is a columnist for SecurityFocus.com.

"What we’re doing, (according) to the letter of the law, is illegal," he acknowledged. "I would like to see the law changed ... We’ve illustrated not just a reasonable recourse, but a minimal responsibility."

Contacting the administrators of infected and attacking computers is not adequate, Mullen said. "This after-the-fact stuff clearly doesn’t work. I’m still getting Nimda attacks," often from the same person.

However, several U.S. officials questioned the ethics of the idea.

"You have trespassed on their system," said Mark Eckenwiler, senior counsel at the U.S. Justice Department’s computer crime division. "There are more legally acceptable ways to deal with the problem than what is essentially hacking into their system."

There also is also the possibility of hacking back at the wrong computer, said C.H. "Chuck" Chassot of the Department of Defense’s Command, Control, Communications & Intelligence office.

"It is the DoD’s policy not to take active measures against anybody because of the lack of certainty of getting the right person," Chassot said.

Jennifer Stisa Grannick, litigation director at the Center for Internet and Society at Stanford Law School, said she felt Mullen’s idea may be protected under a self-defense provision.

"This is a type of defense of property," she said. "There is a lot of sympathy for that (kind of action) from law enforcement and vendors because we do have such a big problem with viruses."

RIAA Appeals Web Royalties Ruling

Both sides in the dispute over Internet music royalties said Wednesday they will appeal a recent federal decision setting royalty rates for music broadcast over the Internet.

In June, the U.S. Copyright Office decided to charge Webcasters 70 cents per song heard by 1,000 listeners, or half of what a government panel had proposed in February.

That decision angered both Internet music broadcasters, who said the rate was still too high, and the recording industry, which said it did not fairly compensate artists and record labels.

Wednesday, the deadline for appealing the ruling, the Recording Industry Association of America, which represents the major music labels, said it would notify the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit of its intention to appeal. Actual briefs will be filed later this year.

About two dozen Internet broadcaster, including America Online Inc., Listen.com and Live365.com, also notified the court of their intention to appeal, according to the Digital Media Association.

Gillette Takes over CMGI Naming Rights to Stadium

Gillette Co. said on Monday it struck a 15-year deal for naming rights of the stadium where the New England Patriots play football after a battered Internet company revised its sponsorship deal.

Andover, Massachusetts-based CMGI Inc. said it will immediately relinquish all naming rights to CMGI Field, which will now be known as Gillette

Stadium.

Terms of the new deal were not disclosed.

CMGI, whose vastly depreciated Internet holdings have made it a poster child for the failed dot-com era, said it will take a charge of $21 million in the quarter ended July 31 to cover the future payments to be made under the deal. CMGI blamed both a downturn in technology industries and the need to focus on its own restructuring for the change in the deal.

Under the old deal struck in 2000, the Internet company was to have paid $7.6 million a year for 15 years. Under the new deal, which comes with more limited rights, CMGI will pay $1.6 million per year from 2003 to 2015.

Gillette said the major signs on the stadium will be replaced by the time the Patriots open their home season on Sept. 9, and more than 2,000 other signs will be replaced during the season.

The stadium’s name change is just the latest in a wave that has swept the country in recent months, as companies find they can no longer pay for their deals, have gone out of business or in some cases no longer wanted naming rights.

In June, baseball’s Houston Astros signed a deal to rename Enron Field as Minute Maid Park. Football’s Baltimore Ravens had to replace PSINet as the sponsor for their stadium, as the St. Louis Rams had to do with former airline TWA.

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